



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Maryland's Social Services Agency



MEDIA RELEASE

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For more information:

Wanda Jones

410-767-7758

wjones4@dhr.state.md.us

DHR CENTRAL AND METRO DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES NAME SOCIAL WORKERS OF THE YEAR

*Baltimore County, Baltimore City Departments of Social Services and Central Office
Applaud Child Welfare and Adult Services Workers*

BALTIMORE – March is National Social Work Appreciation Month and local departments of social services in each jurisdiction are honoring workers who represent the best in the profession.

Social workers and caseworkers perform a wide range of essential tasks including determining the safety of children, identifying new foster parents, helping facilitate adoption services and ensuring the well being of elderly residents who live independently. They touch the lives of thousands of vulnerable children and adults in Maryland and across the country.

“Our social workers are dedicated professionals that strive daily to make a positive difference in the lives of others,” said Department of Human Resources Secretary Brenda Donald. “Now, more than ever, they are the vital link between Maryland’s most vulnerable population and an array of support services that this population needs.” Last year, over 600,000 Marylanders received one or more of the services provided by the Department of Human Resources and its 24 local Departments of Social Services across the state.

Cheryl Smith Thomas, a child welfare worker, is the **Baltimore County Department of Social Services** (DSS) 2009 honoree. She serves as that local department’s point person for voluntary placement requests and works with families of troubled adolescents. . She is always a role model for her co-workers, community partners, and for the consumers of Baltimore County.

The **Baltimore City Department of Social Services** is the largest local department, handling more than half of the state’s cases and employing the largest number of workers. As a result, this local department has named six (6) workers to receive this year’s honor. They include: **Shantae Jones**, child welfare caseworker; **Gary Lee**, Team Decision Making Unit Facilitator; **Elaine Nole**, In-home Service caseworker; **Corine Mullings**, Child Protective Services supervisor; **Andrea Parham**, Permanency/Reunification worker; and **Denise Tillery**, Family Preservation worker.

- Martin O’Malley, Governor
- Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor
- Brenda Donald, Secretary

Denise Tillery: As a Helping Families Stay Together unit caseworker, Ms. Tillery is an asset to Intensive Family Preservation Services and a noteworthy representative of the Baltimore City Department of Social Services.

Andrea Parham: She is the Permanency Intensive Reunification Programs unit has a fundamental interest in people and the intellectual ability to engage individuals and families

Corine Mullings: As a dedicated Safety Children Protective Services Supervisor, Corine routinely faces difficult case situations. She consistently handles challenges calmly and professionally to effectively meet the needs of children and families.

Elaine Nole: She provides in-home services to families with drug-exposed newborns. She is a dedicated caseworker who puts service to families and vulnerable children above all else.

Gary Lee: He works hard to prevent the separation of families by bringing needed resources to the table to assist family members, thus preventing out of home placements.

Shante Jones: She was instrumental in successfully reducing the total case backlog from more than 1,000 cases to less than 100 total cases.

Workers in the local departments of social services deliver direct services, however, there are dedicated social workers within the central office responsible for administering programs. They include **Dr. David Ayer**, Director, Office of Research, Evaluation and Systems Development; **Valarie Colmore**, Performance Review Manager; **Gale B. Fulton**, Licensing and Monitoring Specialist; and **Jeanne Cooper**, Grants Coordinator.

David Ayer: He has been instrumental in helping the Department to better manage and interpret the data. As a result, the Department is able to provide better outcomes for the children and families we serve.

Valarie Colmore: She has worked to enhance the Adult Service's Performance Review System, with the goal of incorporating quality improvement elements.

Gale B. Fulton: A social worker for 32 years, she demonstrates excellent social work and leadership qualities and is very focused, concise and enthusiastic about her work in the Office of Licensing and Monitoring.

Jeanne Cooper: She manages all victim services programs, including the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim Assistance program, Domestic Violence, Rape Crisis and Community Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness programs.

Each of the honorees has been invited to attend an appreciation luncheon to be held on Monday, March 30, 2009. Lt. Governor Anthony Brown will bring remarks at the event.

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The Maryland Department of Human Resources is the state's social service provider. The agency collaborates with 24 local jurisdictions to: provide foster care, adoption and protective services to children; collect and distribute child support payments; and provide temporary cash, food stamps and medical assistance to families. It also administers programs for homeless persons, refugees, migrant workers, victims of crime and women who are displaced, battered or assaulted. Last year, DHR served 638,000 people in need. In terms of its annual budget, DHR is Maryland's fourth largest state agency.

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